

## **Cannon Beach Day-Use Area Improvements**

### **Project Area Location and Description (where)**

Cannon Beach Day-Use Area is located about 3.5 air miles from Yakutat, Alaska, about 2.5 air miles southwest of the Yakutat airport adjacent to an expansive sandy beach on the Gulf of Alaska. There are approximately 7 miles of sandy beach accessed from Forest Development Road (FDR) 9963, which ends at the Cannon Beach Day-Use Area. The Cannon Beach Day-Use Area is about 2 acres in size and consists of a log shelter, log pavilion, parking for about 25 vehicles, a single-hole vault toilet, a buffalo amphibious military vehicle, and the two namesake WWII era cannons. A gravel access path connects the parking/shelter/pavilion area with the restroom and the closest cannon. The furthest cannon may be accessed from either FDR9968, from along the beach bluff, or from a primitive natural surface trail from the other cannon site. The road FDR 9963, shelter, and pavilion border a large open undeveloped area – approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre. Natural groundcover in the clearing is low and reminiscent of meadow or beach vegetation. Strawberries are common.

### **Proposed Action (what)**

Yakutat area has limited developed recreation day-use facilities. The purpose of this project to replace the recreation site's deteriorating shelter and incorporate a covered cooking area with a grill(s); add fixed outdoor tables and seating in an open area between the shelter and pavilion; restore two deteriorating WWII era cannons which will include reattaching their barrels and removing rust; place an interpretive sign at each of the cannon sites and near the buffalo amphibious vehicle; improve signage with a kiosk and traffic signs, including those for handicap parking; and construct a gravel vehicle turn-around from the inner beach road (9968) to the road along the beach fringe. This project occurs outside of an inventoried roadless area, and entirely within the Semi-Remote Recreation land use designation which provides for recreation and tourism in natural-appearing settings. The area receives daily use year round.

The primary objective of this project is to improve the usability of the day-use area as a social gathering space with more seating and a better design; enhance access to the shelter by providing a gravel route to the shelter, an accessible path to each of the cannon sites (approximately 600 linear feet), and two designated handicap parking spaces, bringing the parking area to American Disability Act Standards. Improved interpretation of the site is desired, the two cannons would be partially reconstructed with interpretive signs as well as the WWII era halftrack vehicle located on the site, a historical road runs through the area, which could also be highlighted in interpretive materials. Improvements to the site would benefit the community and area visitors.

A site survey will be done by Forest Service landscape architects, which may change the location or orientation of the facilities or trail. In addition, a design narrative will be written, which is intended to guide the planning process and identify anticipated management or resource issues. These concerns can include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining the character of the setting
- Providing accessibility standards that meet a variety of physical abilities and ages
- Maintaining sensitivity to Native artifacts and archaeological resources
- Protecting sensitive plant species, if found

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- Provide better traffic flow

### **Purpose and Need for Action (why here, why now)**

This site is critical to the local community, not only as an attraction for recreational visitors to Yakutat, but for the community as a whole for recreation. It has easy access for all levels of users and vehicles and is near the community. The site is undersized for the group sizes that use it during the year. One structure is at risk due to rotting. This community is trying to attract more visitors and needs quality facilities to support this effort. Additional community events are being discussed that could use an improved facility. This effort is needed now due to the condition of the existing shelter, which is quickly deteriorating. The community is in dire economic conditions and would benefit from a larger construction project. A new site would also benefit the community health which has also suffered from the economic state.

We would like to make improvements at this location because it is the most common gathering place for outdoor events on the Yakutat Ranger District. The existing shelter is rotting and will become unsafe within the next two or three years. This shelter has three floor-to-almost ceiling side walls which provide good shelter from driving wind and rain. Average daily use of the shelter is at least two people a day from April through October – which accounts for about 525 people a year. In addition to the average daily use, there are at least two occasions a year when the Yakutat community uses the site - the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Fairweather Day (the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in August). During these events about 350 people visit the area. Occasionally there are smaller events such as end-of-the-year school picnics, the Tour de Yakutat Bike Race, Easter Egg Hunts, weddings and other social gatherings. Otherwise people use the site to park and visit the beach. In the past there were tables between the shelter and pavilion that many locals used on nice days. Since these were removed, this social opportunity has been lost. This project will construct new tables and seats so that an otherwise unused area can function as it once did, as a social gathering space. A new picnic shelter with grill under a hooded fume vent and walls that block the driving wind and rain would greatly enhance the quality and quantity of use at this site. Trails lead from the main site to each of the cannons, set along the beach fringe. There is also road access to the cannons, which unfortunately promotes damage to the sites with fires, broken glass, and litter. Access to the cannon sites will be restricted to foot traffic, by placing barricades at the road access points for vehicles. Interpretation of the cannons, inner beach road, and tracked vehicle would also enhance the quality of the experience at Cannon Beach. During high use times like Fairweather Day, traffic flow is a large issue; construction of a turn-around will help traffic congestion.

The primary Land Use Designation in the project area is Semi-Remote Recreation. According to the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for Recreation and Tourism found in the Forest Plan, the Forest Service will *identify opportunities to enhance existing, and provide additional, recreation activities, opportunities, and services where desirable to meet local or Forest-wide recreation demands* (page 4-44, IIB, Tongass Land Management Plan, 2008).

### **Public Participation**

Yakutat, with the assistance of Agnew::Beck Consulting, recently finalized the Yakutat Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Action Plan in September 2012. This plan outlined many priorities which were collected by community surveys done at basketball games, online using survey tools, in the classrooms for elementary school and many public meetings. The Cannon

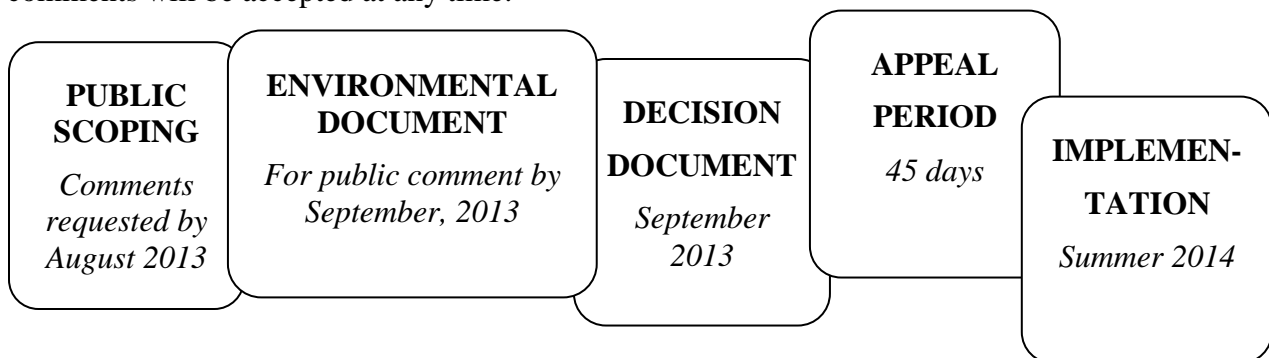
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Beach project was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> on the list of priorities. It was signed by the Yak-Tat Kwaan Corporation, USDA Forest Service-Yakutat Ranger District, City and Borough of Yakutat, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, Yakutat Chamber of Commerce, and the Yakutat district of the National Park Service stating that all these partners would give a good faith effort to make these priorities a priority. The support for this project in general seems very high.

The proposal was presented to the Capital Investment Program in September of 2009, and the NEPA efforts were subsequently funded through recreational facilities funding in FY2013. The Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) listed the Cannon Beach Day-Use Area improvement December 2012. The quarterly listing and subsequent quarters are available on the internet at [http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=37830](http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=37830). From these meetings, the proposed action was outlined. Alaska Native Organizations, relevant State and Federal agencies, and concerned businesses and residents will continue to be involved with this effort.

### **Commenting on this Project Proposal**

Your input and ideas are important in completing the Cannon Beach Day-Use Area Improvements project. We want to hear all of your ideas. Comments are most helpful when they refer to a cause and effect on specific areas or resources within the project area. Please refer to the enclosed maps and fill out the attached comment sheet and return it to us. You can also call (907) 784-3359 and talk to Lee A. Benson, District Ranger. Comments may also be faxed to (907) 784-3457 or e-mailed to [comments-alaska-tongass-yakutat@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-alaska-tongass-yakutat@fs.fed.us) with "Cannon Beach" in the subject line. The interdisciplinary team will review and potentially modify the proposed action based on comments received. It would be most helpful to have comments 30 days following publication of the scoping notice in the Juneau Mountain Empire; however, comments will be accepted at any time.



We look forward to your participation. Your input and ideas will help ensure a successful assessment. Thank you for taking time to help manage your National Forest!

Please comment on specific aspects of the Cannon Beach Day-Use Area Improvements. Let us know if there are specific areas, resources or elements that we should consider in the planning process. The interdisciplinary team (IDT) will review all comments and incorporate them into the planning process.

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NOTE: Our public mailing lists may be made available to those who request them under the Freedom of Information Act. We cannot assure that your name and address will remain confidential if you are on the mailing list.

Please be sure to respond to this letter by mail, fax, email, or telephone if you want to stay on the mailing list. IF WE DO NOT HEAR FROM YOU AT THIS TIME, YOUR NAME **WILL** BE REMOVED FROM THE PROJECT MAILING LIST.

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- ☐ Send me a hard copy letter with a web link to documents
- ☐ Send me a hard copy

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY. If your mailing label is correct, you may cut it out and tape it here.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Fold, staple, stamp and mail-----

From:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(return address requested)

TO:

Yakutat Ranger District  
Tongass National Forest  
Attn: Lee A. Benson  
Cannon Beach Recreation  
PO Box 327  
Yakutat, AK 99689

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## Cannon Beach Day-Use Area Improvements - Scoping

Yakutat Ranger District  
Tongass National Forest  
*Comments requested by*  
***August 1, 2013***

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Yakutat Ranger District  
Tongass National Forest  
PO Box 327  
Yakutat, Alaska 99689